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PRESS RELEASE

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HARVARD INITIATIVE NATIONALLY RECOGNIZES LACDMH's *START* *LA County Mental Health's START program gets high praise for preventing school violence.*

Los Angeles, CA – The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) Emergency Outreach Bureau (EOB) has received national recognition by the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, for its School Threat Assessment and Response Team (START). START is one of the 111 innovative government initiatives, known as [Bright Ideas](#), selected by a team of policy experts from academic and public sectors.

Funded by the voter-passed Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), through the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) component, START addresses pre-meditated violence that occurs in educational settings from elementary schools to universities. LACDMH has developed partnerships with educational institutions, federal and local law enforcement agencies and mental health providers, focused on the prevention and early intervention of students on a pathway to violence. Established in 2009 with the exclusive goal of preventing campus violence, START provides free training and program consultation, early screening and identification, assessment, intervention and case management.

“The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health is honored by this national recognition and, as usual, our team does its best work when it partners up with others. In this case, school districts and law enforcement,” said LACDMH Director Marvin J. Southard, D.S.W. “START, by bringing us all together, has changed and saved lives.”

Bright Ideas, such as LACDMH's START, will be showcased on the Ash Center's [Government Innovators Network](#), an online platform for practitioners and policymakers to share innovative public policy solutions. The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation is known for advancing excellence in governance and strengthens democratic institutions worldwide (www.ash.harvard.edu).

(More)

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The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health is the largest county-operated mental health department in the United States, directly operating 75 program sites and more than 100 co-located sites. Each year, it contracts with approximately 1,000 agencies and individual practitioners to provide a spectrum of mental health services to more than 250,000 residents of all ages. The Department's mission -- enriching lives through partnership to strengthen our community's capacity to support recovery and resiliency -- is accomplished by working with stakeholders and community partners to provide clinically competent, culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate mental health services to clients in the least restrictive manner possible.

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